

# Age-Based Guidelines for Kids' Internet Use

BY: EMILY LISTFIELD

OCTOBER 07, 2011

The American Academy of Pediatricians (AAP) helped Microsoft develop age-based guidance for Internet use with the family safety settings in both of these products. It's important to remember that these are guidelines only. You know your child best.

## Up to age 10

Supervise your children until they are age 10. You can use Internet safety tools to limit access to content, websites, and activities, and be actively involved in your child's Internet use, but Microsoft recommends that you sit with your child when they use the Internet, until the age of 10. Here are some safety tips to consider when you go online with your 2-10 year old:



1. It's never too early to foster open and positive communication with children. It's a good idea to talk with them about computers and to stay open to their questions and curiosity.
2. Always sit with your kids at this age when they're online.
3. Set clear rules for Internet use.
4. Insist that your children not share personal information such as their real name, address, phone number, or passwords with people they meet online.
5. If a site encourages kids to submit their names to personalize the web content, help your kids create online nicknames that don't give away personal information
6. Use family safety tools to create appropriate profiles for each family member and to help filter the Internet.
7. All family members should act as role models for young children who are just starting to use the Internet.

## Ages 11 to 14

Children this age are savvier about their Internet experience, but it's still a good idea to supervise and monitor their Internet use to help ensure they are not exposed to inappropriate materials. You can use Internet safety tools to limit access to content and websites and provide a report of Internet activities. Make sure children this age understand what personal information they should not give over the Internet.

When your kids are this age it might not be practical to physically supervise their Internet use at all times. Here are some safety tips to consider when you go online with your 11-14 year old:

1. It is a good idea to foster open and positive communication with your children. Talk with them about computers and stay open to their questions and curiosity.
2. Set clear rules for Internet use.

3. Insist that your children not share personal information such as their real name, address, phone number, or passwords with people they meet online.
4. If a site encourages kids to submit their names to personalize the web content, help your kids create online nicknames that give away no personal information.
5. Use family safety tools to create appropriate profiles for each family member and to help filter the Internet
6. Set family safety tools on the medium security setting, which should have some limitations on content, websites, and activities.
7. Keep Internet-connected computers in an open area where you can easily supervise your kids' activities.
8. Help protect your children from offensive pop-up windows by using the pop-up blocker that's built in to Internet Explorer.
9. Encourage your children to tell you if something or someone online makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Stay calm and remind your kids they are not in trouble for bringing something to your attention. Praise their behavior and encourage them to come to you again if the same thing happens.

### **Ages 15 to 18**

Teens should have almost limitless access to content, websites, or activities. They are savvy about the Internet but they still need parents to remind them of appropriate safety guidelines. Parents should be available to help their teens understand inappropriate messages and avoid unsafe situations. It's a good idea for parents to remind teens what personal information should not be given over the Internet. Here are some safety tips to consider as you guide your teens online:

1. Continue to keep family communication as open and positive about computers as you can. Keep talking about online lives, friends, and activities, just as you would about other friends and activities. Encourage your teens to tell you if something or someone online makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. If you're a teen and something or someone online doesn't seem quite right, then speak up.
2. Create a list of Internet house rules as a family. Include the kinds of sites that are off limits, Internet hours, what information should not be shared online, and guidelines for communicating with others online, including social networking.
3. Keep Internet-connected computers in an open area and not in a teen's bedroom.
4. Investigate Internet-filtering tools (such as Windows Vista Parental Controls, Windows 7 Parental Controls, or Windows Live Family Safety) as a complement to parental supervision.
5. Help protect your children from offensive pop-up windows by using the pop-up blocker that's built in to Internet Explorer.
6. Know which websites your teens visit, and whom they talk to. Encourage them to use monitored chat rooms, and insist they stay in public chat room area.
7. Insist that they never agree to meet an online friend.

8. Teach your kids not to download programs, music, or files without your permission. File-sharing and taking text, images, or artwork from the web may infringe on copyright laws and can be illegal.
9. Talk to your teenagers about online adult content and pornography, and direct them to positive sites about health and sexuality.
10. Help protect them from spam. Tell your teens not to give out their email address online, not to respond to junk mail, and to use email filters.
11. Be aware of the websites that your teens frequent. Make sure your kids are not visiting sites with offensive content, or posting personal information. Be aware of the photos that teens post of themselves and their friends.
12. Teach your kids responsible, ethical, online behavior. They should not be using the Internet to spread gossip, bully, or threaten others.
13. Make sure your teens check with you before making financial transactions online, including ordering, buying, or selling items.
14. Discuss online gambling and its potential risks with your teens. Remind them that it is illegal for them to gamble online.